

Symons, Arthur
A book of twenty songs.

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forgetful
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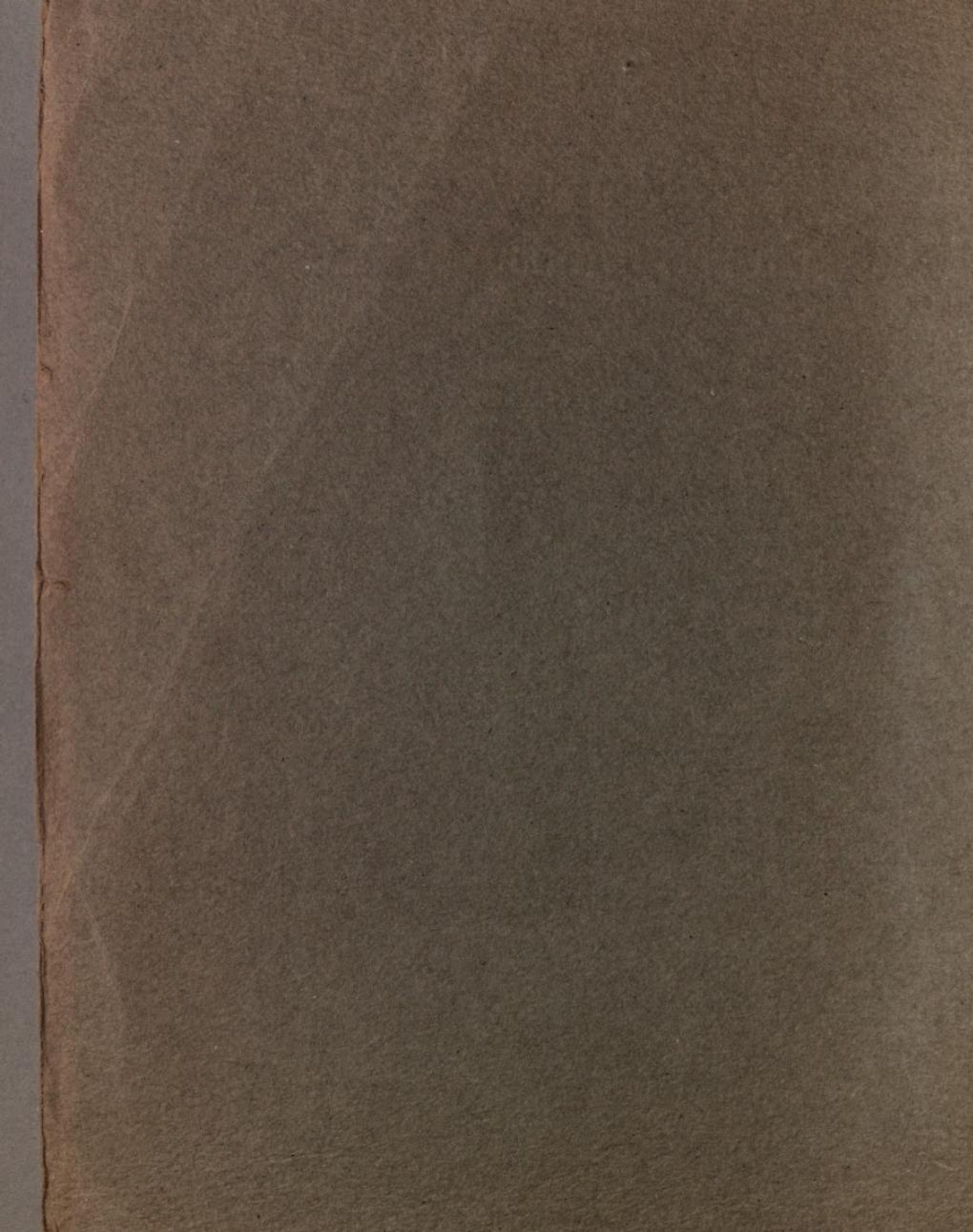
Alfred G.
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A.S. Carter



Book of Twenty Songs
by Arthur Symons.

London :
M. Dent & Co.
1905.



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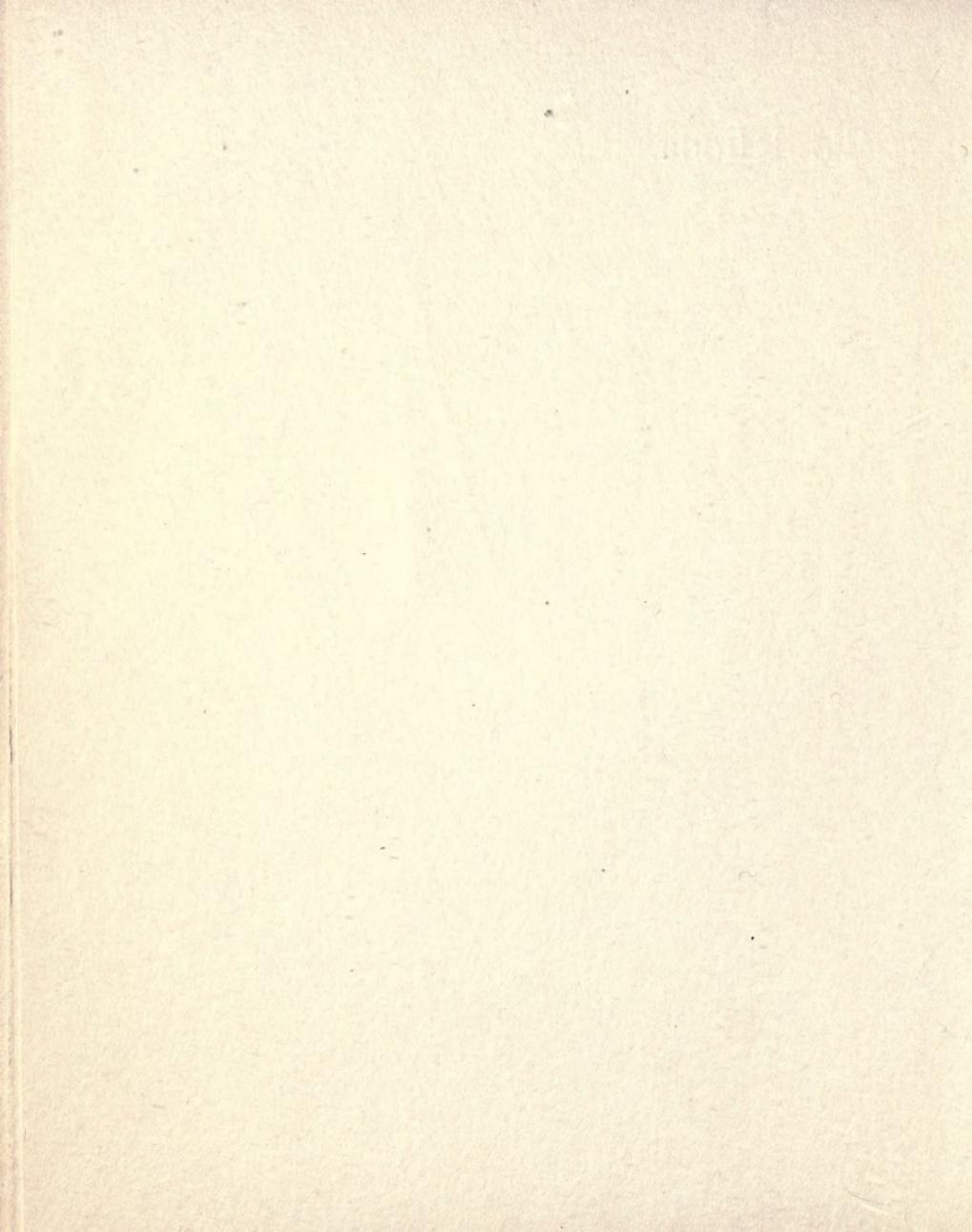
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To Rhoda.



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I. Sing-Song.

To live and die under a roof
Drives the brood of thoughts aloof ;
To walk by night under the sky
Lets the birds of thought fly ;
Thoughts that may not fly abroad
Rot like lilies in the road ;
But the thoughts that fly too far
May singe their wings against a star.

II. To a Sea-Gull.

Bird of the fierce delight,
Brother of foam, as white
And winged as foam is,
Wheeling again from flight
To some unfooted height,
Where your blithe home is ;

Bird of the wind and spray,
Crying by night and day
Sorrowful laughter,
How shall man's thought survey
Your will or your wings' way,
Or follow after ?

What pride is man's ? and why,
Angel of air, should I
Joy to be human ?

You walk and swim and fly,
Laugh like a man and cry
Like any woman.

I would your spirit were mine
When your wings dip and shine,
Smoothly advancing ;
I drink a breathless wine
Of speed in your divine
Aerial dancing.

III. Song.

O why is it that a curl
Or the eyelash of a girl,
Or a ribbon from her hair,
Or the glove she used to wear,
Weighed with all a man has done,
With a thought or with a throne,
Drops the balance like a stone ?

Antony was king of men,
Cleopatra was a queen,
And for Cleopatra he
Flings away his sovereignty.
Yet as well can Kate or Nan
Find, as Cleopatra can,
Antony in any man.

IV. Two Love-Songs.

I do not know if your eyes are green or
grey

Or if there are other eyes brighter than
they ;

They have looked in my eyes ; when they look
in my eyes I can see

One thing, and a thing to be surely the death
of me.

If I had been born a blind man without
sight,

That sorrow would never have set this wrong
thing right ;

When I touched your hand I would feel, and
no need to see,

The one same thing, and a thing the death of
me.

Only when I am asleep I am easy in mind,
And my sleep is gone, and a thing I cannot
find ;
I am wishing that I could sleep both day and
night
In a bed where I should not toss from left to
right.

V.

O woman of my love, I am walking with you on
the sand,

And the moon's white on the sand and the
foam's white in the sea ;

And I am thinking my own thoughts, and your
hand is on my hand,

And your heart thinks by my side, and it's not
thinking of me.

O woman of my love, the world is narrow and
wide,

And I wonder which is the lonelier of us two?

You are thinking of one who is near to your
heart, and far from your side ;

I am thinking my own thoughts, and they are
all thoughts of you.

VI. A Song of Poltescoe Valley.

Gold and blue of a sunset sky,
Bees that buzz with a sleepy tune,
A lowing cow and a cricket's cry,
Swallows flying across the moon.

Swallows flying across the moon,
The trees darken, the fields grow white ;
Day is over, and night comes soon :
The wings are all gone into the night.

VII. For a Picture of Rossetti.

Smoke of battle lifts and lies
Sullen in her smouldering eyes,
Where are seen
Captive bales of merchandise.

Here are shudderings of spears,
Webs of ambush, nets of fears,
Here have been
Prisons, and a place of tears.

In her hair have souls been caught ;
Here are snared the strength of thought,
Pride of craft ;
Here desire has come to nought.

Have not her lips kissed again
Lips that kissed for love's sake, when

Her lips laughed
Like a passing-bell for men?

This is what Rossetti says
In the crisis of a face.

VIII. By Loe Pool.

The pool glitters, the fishes leap in the sun
With joyous fins, and dive in the pool again ;
I see the corn in sheaves, and the harvestmen,
And the cows coming down to the water one by
one.

Dragon-flies mailed in lapis and malachite
Flash through the bending reeds and blaze on
the pool ;
Seaward, where trees cluster, the shadow is
cool ;
I hear a sighing, where the sea is, out of sight ;
It is noontide, and the fishes leap in the pool.

IX. Song.

Dear love, let's not put away
Love against a rainy day ;
You are careful, and would hoard
Some of that which can't be stored ;
For, like roses which are born
To die between a night and morn,
Being once plucked, being once worn,
So the rose of love's delight
Only lasts a day or night ;
But what matter, so there be
Each morn new roses on the tree ?

X. Stratford-on-Avon.

Bright leaves and the pale grass turn grey ;
Now, sudden as a thought, one swan
Moves on the water and is gone ;
The broad and liberal flood of day
Ebbs to thin twilight, and night soon
Out of the wells of dark fills up
The valley like a brimming cup
With silver waters of the moon.

This is the ardent hour of peace ;
The Avon like a mirror lies
Under the pale November skies ;
The shaken moon and the still trees
Trouble the water not a whit,
And, secret as a hidden word,
One note is spoken by one bird
As if the water answered it.

XI. The Rope-Maker.

I weave the strands of the grey rope,
I weave with sorrow, I weave with hope,
I weave in youth, love, and regret,
I weave life into the net.

When I was a child the care began,
And now my child shall be a man ;
When I am old, and my fingers shake,
There'll be nets to mend, and more nets to
make.

And life's a weary and heavy thing,
And there's no rest in the evening ;
And long or light though the labour be,
It's a life to the net, and nets to the sea.

XII. The Turning Dervish.

Stars in the heavens turn,
I worship like a star,
And in its footsteps learn
Where peace and wisdom are.

Man crawls as a worm crawls ;
Till dust with dust he lies,
A crooked line he scrawls
Between the earth and skies.

Yet God, having ordained
The course of star and sun,
No creature hath constrained
A meaner course to run.

I, by his lesson taught,
Imaging his design,

Have diligently wrought
Motion to be divine.

I turn until my sense,
Dizzied with waves of air,
Spins to a point intense,
And spires and centres there.

There, motionless in speed,
I drink that flaming peace,
Which in the heavens doth feed
The stars with bright increase.

Some spirit in me doth move
Through ways of light untrod,
Till, with excessive love,
I drown, and am in God.

XIII. Hymn to Fire.

Son of God and man,
When the world began,
First-born of love and hate,
Where was thy hid state?
Thou bliss by God denied,
Till the human pride
Snatched thee, and brought down
Heaven's breath for his own.

Spectre of the rose,
When thy red heart grows
Fierce, and thy delight
Makes a morn of night,
Do the stars grow pale,
Lest thy leapings scale
Heaven, and thou again
Harness them in thy train?

XIV. Sea Twilight.

The sea, a pale blue crystal cup,
With pale water was brimmed up ;
And there was seen, on either hand,
Liquid sky and shadowy sand.

The loud and bright and burning day,
Charred to ashes, ebbed away ;
The listening twilight only heard
Water whispering one word.

XV. Song of the Sirens.

Our breasts are cold, salt are our kisses,
Your blood shall whiten in our sea-blisses ;
A man's desire is a flame of fire,
But chill as water is our desire,
Chill as water that sucks in
A drowning man's despairing chin
With a little kissing noise;
And like the water's voice our voice.

Our hands are colder than your lovers',
Colder than pearls that the sea covers :
Are a girl's hands as white as pearls ?
Take the hands of the sea-girls,
And come with us to the under-sands ;
We will hold in our cold hands
Flaming heart and burning head,
And put thought and love to bed.

We are the last desires ; we have waited,
Till, by all things mortal sated,
And by dreams deceived, the scorn
Of every foolish virgin morn,
You, awakening at last,
Drunken, beggared of the past,
In the last lust of despair
Tangle your souls into our hair.

XVI. Autumn.

There is so little wind at all,
The last leaves cling, and do not fall
From the bare branches' ends ; I sit
Under a tree and gaze at it,
A slender web against the sky,
Where a small grey cloud goes by ;
I feel a speechless happiness
Creep to me out of quietness.

What is it in the earth, the air,
The smell of autumn, or the rare
And half reluctant harmonies
The mist weaves out of silken skies,
What is it shuts my brain, and brings
These sleepy dim awakenings,
Till I and all things seem to be
Kin and companion to a tree ?

XVII. Winter in Spring.

Winter is over, and the ache of the year
Quieted into rest ;
The torn boughs heal, and time of the leaf is near,
And the time of the nest.

The poor man shivers less by his little hearth,
He will warm his hands in the sun ;
He thinks there may be friendliness in the earth
Now the winter is done.

Winter is over, I see the gentle and strange
And irresistible Spring :
Where is it I carry winter, that I feel no change
In anything ?

XVIII. Easter Meditation.

Learn wisdom, this is wisdom, cry
The teachers ; and the teachers die.
What should it profit me were mine
The wisdom of the Antonine,
Or Plato's? What is it to me
If that be wisdom or this be ?
I know the same unfaded world,
A pebble from the brook, is hurled
Forth from Time's sling through endless ways,
And I shall have no part or place
Save in the pebble's senseless speed.
Wherein shall wisdom to my need
Minister ? how shall wisdom save
From the last folly of the grave ?

XIX. Night.

The night's held breath,
And the stars' steady eyes :
Is it sleep, is it death,
In the earth, in the skies ?

In my heart of hope,
In my restless will,
There is that should not stop
Though the earth stood still,

Though the heavens shook aghast,
As the frost shakes a tree,
And a strong wind cast
The stars in the sea.

XX. A Song against Love.

There is a thing in the world that has been
since the world began :

The hatred of man for woman, the hatred of
woman for man.

When shall this thing be ended ? When love
ends, hatred ends,

For love is a chain between foes, and love is a
sword between friends.

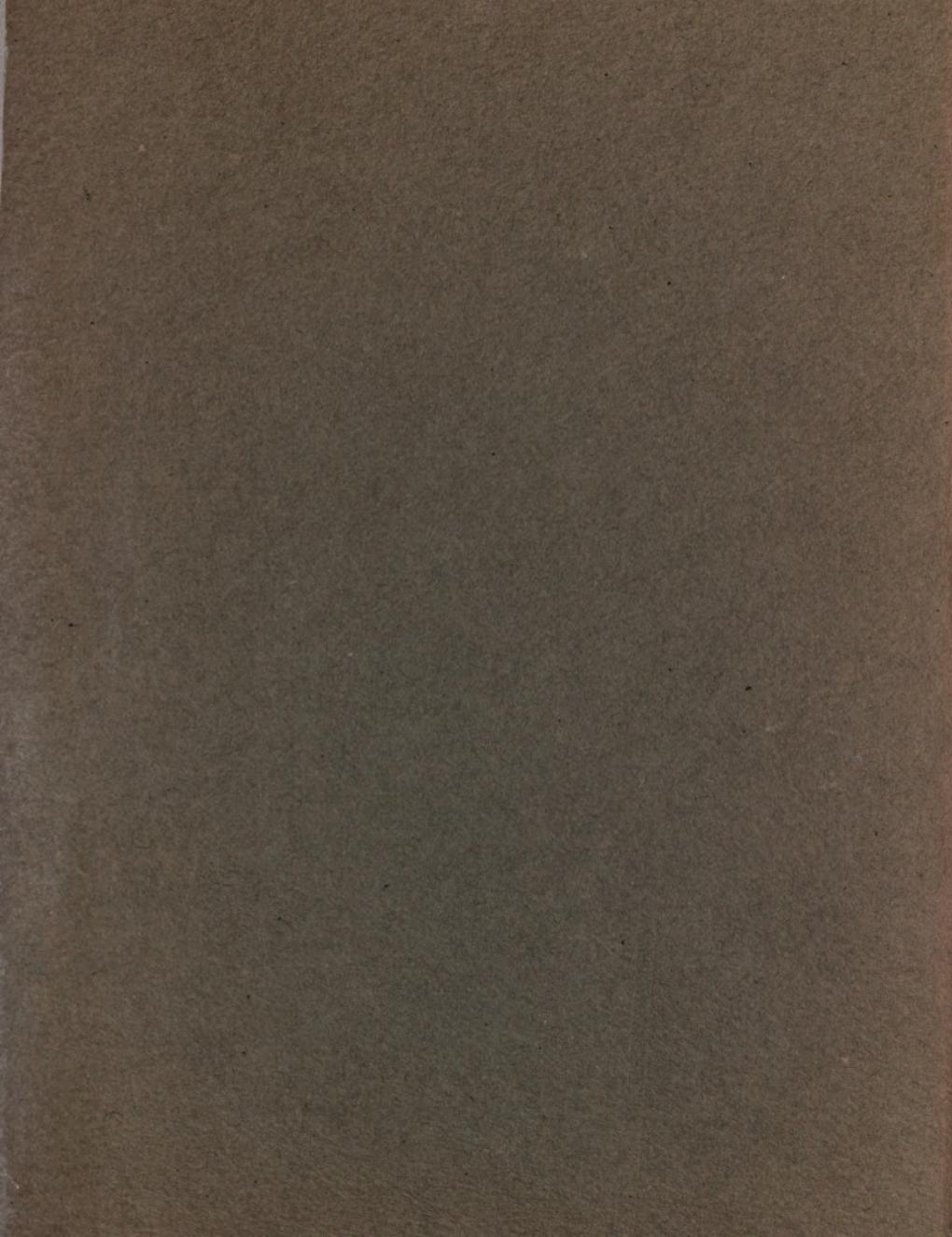
Shall there never be love without hatred ? Not
since the world began,

Until man teach honour to woman, and woman
teach pity to man.

O that a man might live his life for a little tide
Without this rage in his heart, and without this
foe at his side !

He could eat and sleep and be merry and forget,
he could live well enough,
Were it not for this thing that remembers and
hates, and that hurts and is love.
But peace has not been in the world since love
and the world began,
For the man remembers the woman, and the
woman remembers the man.

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